

Newspaper: Providence Journal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Caprio says furlough plan is savings model

At least 23 non-union Treasury Department employees will give up five days of pay over the next 18 months.

**BY STEVE PEOPLES**

JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — Furloughs are back.

At least 23 non-union Treasury Department employees have agreed to give up five days of pay over the next 18 months, a move General Treasurer Frank T. Caprio says should be an example to all state departments grappling with a budget deficit projected at \$450 million next year.

"Our team has come together to recognize that we all need to lead by example and do everything we can to cut costs at a time when the state is in a serious budget crisis," Caprio said in a statement. "I would like to see all state departments and municipal governments seriously consider such action."

The plan, announced yesterday, will save state taxpayers an estimated \$50,000. A brief analysis produced by the treasurer's office suggests that Rhode Island could save more than \$8 million next year if all non-union employees in leadership positions across state government agreed to a similar furlough plan.

The Treasury Department managers agreed to identify five days over the next 18 months in which they will essentially work for free, forgoing on average \$2,000 in salary.

Caprio's announcement came two days before Governor Carcieri is required to release his 2008-09 spending plan. Last year, Carcieri proposed a four-day furlough, retracting the proposal weeks later following opposition from unions and department heads.

The governor's office yesterday would not say whether the new budget would include furloughs. But in an interview late last month, Carcieri said he was leaning toward plans that included unpaid work days and asking state employees to extend their workweek.

"Most of the world is 40 hours, that's where I believe we should be at a norm," Carcieri said, adding that he would like to propose "some kind of way to essentially have everybody take a day off ... Work is open, but it's not a paid day."

"It may be that we're looking at the legislature, I might need their help to say it's going to apply to everyone," he said.

House Finance Committee Chairman Steven M. Costantino, D-Providence, yesterday refused to comment on broad furlough plans, but thanked Caprio for his effort. Meanwhile, AFL-CIO Treasurer George Nee reiterated organized labor's opposition to furloughs.

"If people have those kinds of proposals ... they have to do that through the collective-bargaining process," he said, "otherwise you're reducing people's wages unilaterally."

speoples@projo.com / (401) 277-7513